

Rowan County Health Department
1811 East Innes Street – Salisbury, NC 28146-6030

MEMO

To: Rowan County Board of Commissioners
CC: Aaron Church, County Manager
From: Alyssa Harris, Public Health Director
Date: April 18, 2023
Re: Rowan County Health Department – Environmental Health On-site Water Protection Program Voluntary Audit

Situation:

The Rowan County Health Department (RCHD) continuously assesses departments for quality assurance and quality improvement. Each Rowan County Health Department program is audited during the North Carolina Local Health Department Accreditation cycle. The Environmental Health On-site Water Protection program (OSWP) was last assessed in January 2020. The RCHD found it appropriate to request a mid-cycle audit from the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services – Division of Public Health.

Background:

Rowan County Public Health - Environmental Health houses two programs – Onsite Wastewater Protection and Food, Lodging, and Institutions. The mission of the Environmental Health Section is to protect people by promoting a safe and healthy environment in partnership with private businesses and public agencies through consistent application of education, best practices, and compliance monitoring.

The objective of program reviews is to perform an accurate and impartial review of a county's on-site wastewater and private drinking water well programs. The review is done by evaluating the following at the local health department: staff performance, procedures used to implement state laws and rules, the record keeping system, and any other pertinent items.

Assessment:

Included in this packet of information is:

1. The January 2020 audit of the Rowan County OSWP program.
2. The April 2023 audit of the Rowan County OSWP program
3. April 2023 email correspondence with Regional Specialist Teresa Davis regarding the staff and design

Progress made for the RCHD Environmental Health OSWP program since January 2020 Audit:

Issue/Area	Solutions
Staffing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hired new Environmental Health Manager with substantial education and experience in March 2020 • Addressed appropriate staffing/positions with investment from the County – 1.5 FTE and contracts to 4.0 FTE • Staff sign-on bonus created to attract talent in July 2020 • Fully staffed from December 2022 – April 2023 • Staff salaries adjusted for market value during County Salary Study for FY22-23 • Additional positions added FY21-22 and February 2023
Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchase and use of GPS systems • Transitioning to EnerGov system for streamline approach to permits across all Rowan County departments. • In process of scanning all documents for parcels from paper copies to searchable files
Operations: Backlog, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Permits</u>: All issues have been corrected from 2020 for applications of site evaluations, completeness of permits, and procedures corrected • <u>Backlog</u>: OSWP backlog of oldest application reduced from 14 weeks to a fluctuation of 3 – 6 weeks depending on weather, staffing, number of repairs, and number of applications. • <u>Application Appeals Process</u>: Appeals can occur if you disagree with the evaluation of the property – first they would go to EH Manager and next appeal goes to the state
Fee Schedule	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-established in FY21-22, resulting in \$150,000 increase in revenue to offset taxpayer burden. • Reviewed in FY22-23, created new pathways for COVID permits, redraw only option, and onsite meeting pilot program.
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In January 2023, developers requested a pathway for a onsite meeting option with EH Specialists. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Pilot program created and approved March 2023, including two staff for one hour of onsite time. • EH Specialists providing email for upcoming site visits • Held Meet and Greet for OSWP and community partners March 23 • Building new partnership with Salisbury-Rowan Home Builders Association for information dissemination
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Created FAQ/Guide for the OSWP Permitting process with contact information of staff • Updating forms to explain differences between requested and permitted system

Opportunities/In-Progress as of April 2023

Issue/Area	Solutions
Staffing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek qualified candidates with certifications to fill open positions. • Workforce Readiness Report to review current realities for the REHS career development to reduce turnover
Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued use of GPS systems • Fully operational EnerGov system with applications appropriately built out and training for citizenry. • Finalize scanning project to improve efficiency for citizens to quickly access documents
Operations: Backlog, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Backlog: Goal of two (2) weeks or less • Small changes to footprint of a home: Working with state to establish process to document small changes without having to “start over” for the application process • Other Permit/Operational adjustments: Any changes between what was requested (such as a conventional system) and what is able to be permitted (including a more complex system) or not permitted (in cases of large lots with a certain area selected for review) will be communicated in a timely manner with the owner/builder. • A new sign off sheet will include information about the type of system that has been permitted and the reasoning for why that is the necessary system. • The sheet can also include other options for citizens – i.e., where to get a second opinion with a private consultant
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing/Quarterly Meet and Greet for EH OSWP and community partners. • Building new partnership with Salisbury-Rowan Home Builders Association for information dissemination • Exploring ongoing partnerships for local meetings with builders, septic installers, well drillers, and contractors
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exploring videos explaining each process of IP, CA, wells, and applications • Requested document from State division on how to safely clear land for evaluation per community member request • Explanation of difference between a County REHS and a private sector contracted soil scientist

Recommendations:

Rowan County Public Health respectfully requests the Board of Commissioners to review the 2023 audit as presented.